

Earthquake preparedness.

In California, earthquakes are a fact of life. A small investment in securing your water heater can prevent a lot of property damage—and possible danger from ruptured gas lines. Check your local building codes for the safety guidelines appropriate for your area. Then you can either call a professional or take the project on yourself by following these simple steps.

How to brace your water heater.

1

You will need:

- Two pieces of 22-gauge metal earthquake straps about 10 feet long and 1-1/2" wide
- Four 2-1/2" by 5/16" lag bolts
- Drill and 3/16" drill bit
- A wrench

2

Place one earthquake strap about a foot from the top of the water heater, over the insulation blanket if you have one. If possible, completely encircle the tank with the strap. This helps prevent the tank from swaying during an earthquake. Never place straps over the controls or over any pipes that run along the outside of the tank.

3

Use your drill to make pilot holes for the lag bolts. Then thread the lag bolts through each end of the strap and screw them into the wall studs on each side of the tank. Make sure the strap holds the water heater snugly.

4

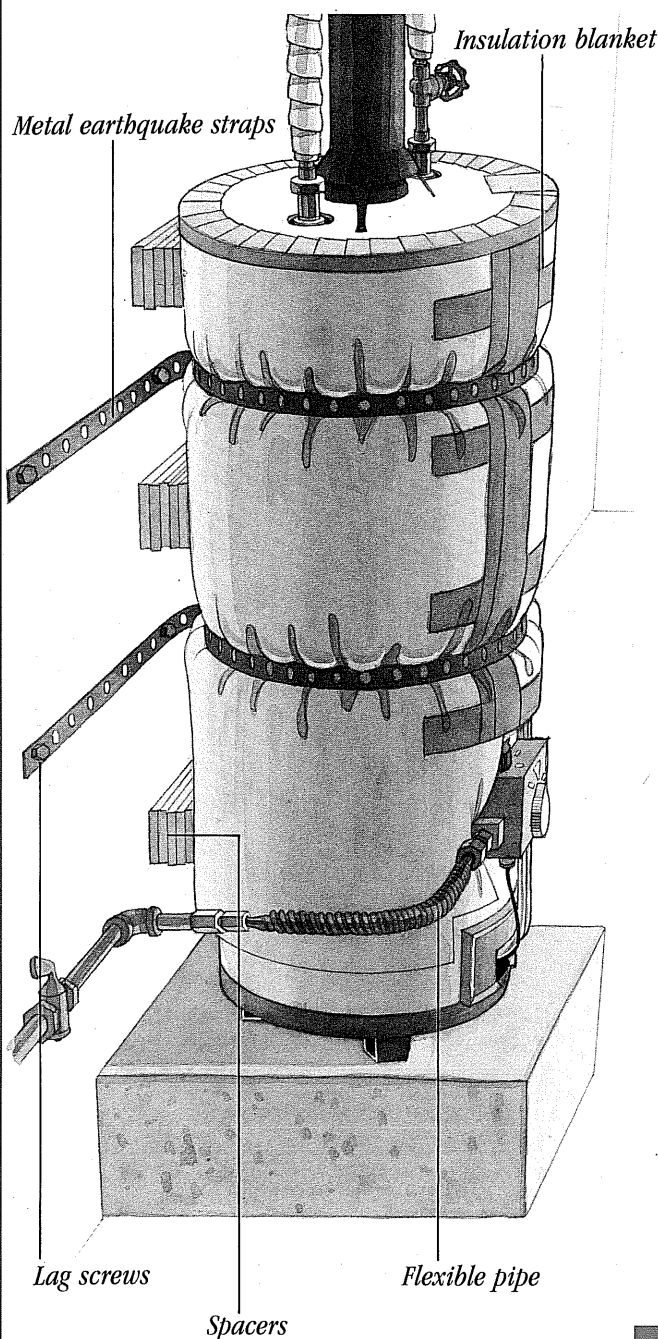
Repeat the process for the bottom strap, installing it about 18 inches from the bottom of the tank.

5

If there is a space between the tank and the wall, install spacers to prevent the tank from shifting backwards. Spacers can be cut to fit from drywall or other noncombustible materials. Attach them to the wall behind the tank.

6

Be sure a flexible pipe is used to connect the gas supply to the heater. If not, call a plumbing or heating contractor.



Other safety tips.

Maintain proper ventilation.

Don't block the vents in the door, floor or ceiling of your water heater closet. Without proper ventilation, you may be forcing combustion gas back into your home. Also, a gas water heater's pilot light may go out.

Observe fire safety precautions.

Never store anything flammable near your water heater. The heat source—especially the flame of a gas heater—could start a fire.

Illustration by Craig Marshall

